

MCCLURE'S MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 1910 • FIFTEEN CENTS

*King of Spain
+ Betrothed*



Frank X. Leyendcker

McCLURE'S MAGAZINE

S. S. McClure, President; Cameron Mackenzie, Treasurer; Curtis P. Brady, Secretary

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The S. S. McClure CO., New York

44-60 East 23d Street, New York

186 Oxford Street West, London

SUBSCRIPTION TERMS: In the U. S., Mexico, Cuba, and American Possessions \$1.50 per year. In Canada \$2.00 per year. In all other countries in the Postal Union \$2.50 per year

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"THREE O'CLOCK ON AN APRIL AFTERNOON, AND THE MAIL TRAIN FROM BOMBAY
STEAMED INTO THE STATION"

A PERVERTED PUNISHMENT

BY

ALICE PERRIN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY WALTER JACK DUNCAN

THREE o'clock on an April afternoon, and the mail train from Bombay steamed into the station of one of the largest cities of northern India.

The platform instantly became covered with a struggling, yelling mass of natives; fat, half-naked merchants; consequential Bengali clerks with shiny yellow skins and lank black locks; swaggering sepoys on leave, with jaunty caps and fiercely curled beards; keen, hawk-faced Afghans wrapped in garments suggestive of the Scriptures; whole parties of excited villagers, bound for some pilgrim shrine,

clinging to one another and shouting discordantly; refreshment-sellers screaming their wares, and coolies bearing luggage on their heads, vociferating as wildly as if their very lives depended on penetrating the crowd.

Into this bewildering, deafening babel stepped Major Kenwithin from a first-class compartment. His rugged face, tanned and seared by twenty years of Indian service, wore anything but an amiable expression, and he barely responded to the cordial greeting of a young Englishman who was threading his way through a bevy of noisy, chattering native females toward the parcels office.

"Missis went off all right?" shouted Cartwright over the crowd of draped heads.

Kenwithin only nodded, and turned his attention to his luggage and orderly.

"Poor old chap — how he feels it!" muttered the other, as he proceeded to claim the parcel he had come to the station to fetch, while Kenwithin drove to his bungalow in the native cavalry lines feeling utterly and completely wretched.

The square, thatched house wore a dreary, deserted appearance. The plants in the veranda drooped, and the clambering bougainvillea and gold-mohur blossoms hung from the walls in long, neglected trails, waiting in vain for "the mem-sahib's" careful supervision. The interior of the building shared the general dejection inevitable to an Anglo-Indian establishment from which a woman's presence has been suddenly withdrawn, and the Major's lonely heart ached as he roamed through the rooms, missing his wife more and more at every step. How on earth was he to get through six long, weary months without her? How had he ever lived without her at all?

And yet, until the day he met his wife, John Kenwithin had managed to lead an existence entirely after his own heart. His regiment first, and then shooting of every description, had been all he lived for. With women he had had little to do, for he hated society and entertained no very exalted opinion of the opposite sex. He knew that the ladies of his own family had been good, loving wives and mothers, with duty as the key-note of their lives, and he wished all women were like them; but as, from what he had observed, this did not appear to be the case, he avoided the feminine world as much as possible.

However, the time came when his astonished friends learned that he was engaged to be married, and subsequently discovered that he had made a very admirable selection. Certainly no one could have suited his tenacious, truth-loving, somewhat harsh temperament better than the wife he had chosen, for she was a self-denying, conscientious soul, past her first girlhood, with a simple, sterling directness of character, and a calm, restful beauty of her own in her steadfast gray eyes and regular features. She adored the Major with her whole being; she considered nothing but his comfort and convenience; she bored people to death by making him her sole topic of conversation; and, in short, she surpassed even the memory of his mother and aunts in her capacity for doing her duty and worshiping her husband. The pair had led an ideally happy married life for the space of two years, and then had come Mrs. Kenwithin's sudden failure of health and the doctor's urgent advice that she should proceed

"home" without delay to consult a heart specialist. So the Major had been forced to let her go alone, with no prospect of following her, for leave was stopped that season because of trouble on the frontier.

All that day he wandered aimlessly about the house, unable to work or to pull himself together. He felt that he had no heart to go to mess that night and answer kindly meant inquiries as to his wife's departure, so he wrote to Cartwright (who was his first cousin and senior subaltern in the regiment) and asked him to come and dine in the bungalow. Cartwright readily assented. He was fond of Kenwithin and understood him thoroughly; he knew of the goodness as well as the narrow sternness that lay in his cousin's nature — knew that he was as straight and honest as the day, but also — as is frequently the case — most suspicious and intolerant of sin and weakness in others.

The two men ate their dinner more or less in silence. Cartwright made little attempt to talk, for he felt that well-intentioned conversation would be more likely to irritate than soothe; but afterward, as they sat outside in front of the bungalow, smoking their cheroots, he racked his brains for some subtle method of distracting his cousin's thoughts. One plan he was fairly certain would succeed, but he hesitated to adopt it. Cartwright had never confided his own trouble to any one, and only his anxiety to rouse Kenwithin from his moody reflections made him contemplate the mention of it now.

He took the cheroot from his lips and cleared his throat nervously. The sudden sound rang out on the warm, clear stillness of the Indian night, and subdued rustlings of startled birds and squirrels shook the creepers and undergrowth. He glanced around for a moment. The thatched roof of the bungalow loomed up dark against the sky, which was already glimmering with the rising moon, and tall plantain trees, edging the garden, waved and bowed, disturbed by the puff of warm wind that crept round the walls of the bungalow, wafting scents of mango and jasmine blossom in its train.

"I say, John," began Cartwright shamefacedly, feeling glad that the moon had not yet looked over the thatched roof, "I'm beastly sorry for you, old man. I know what it is to part from a woman you'd sell your soul for."

Kenwithin turned quickly toward him.

"You? Why, I thought — you never said —?"

Cartwright smiled without amusement.

"No, because the less said about it the better. I suppose, with your notions, you'd call it a disgraceful affair, but I'm hanged if I can see it in that light."



"KENWITHIN'S EYES HARDENED AND HIS MOUTH GREW SET"

"A married woman?"

Cartwright nodded, and his memory turned to the face he loved, keeping him silent. Kenwithin's eyes hardened and his mouth grew set, and as the moon rose slowly over the round of the thatched roof, the silver light showed up his large, rugged features clearly against the dense background of the veranda, and touched his grizzled hair to whiteness.

"She knows you care for her?" he asked.

Cartwright nodded again, and covered his eyes with his hand, for in the brightness of the moonlight recollections seemed to start from every shadow.

"And is her husband a brute to her?"

"No. That is the worst of it."

Kenwithin laughed comprehensively.

"Look here, my dear boy, drop it! The whole thing is wrong and foolish, and nothing but harm can come of it. Either a woman is good or she is bad, and there's no intermediate stage. No decent married woman would listen to a word of love from a man not her husband.

I know the class. Without being actually depraved, they are false to the heart's core — they can't exist without illicit admiration!"

A dark look of rage swept over Cartwright's face, but with an effort he controlled the outburst of fierce defense that rose to his lips — for had he not brought this on himself by opening the subject to a man of Kenwithin's ideas? He carefully selected another cheroot, and spoke in the intervals of lighting it.

"Forgive — [puff] — my saying so — [puff] — Kenwithin, but I think you're a bit narrow-minded. The woman I shall love till the day of my death is hardly of that class. No doubt I was wrong, and she weak; but there was no real harm in it. And now she has gone home. The only thing is that occasionally, to-night for instance, the future seems somewhat unfaceable."

"Granted that there was no real harm, and that I am narrow-minded, the thing is still unsound throughout, and you know it! Perhaps I am behind the times, but my idea of woman *as she should be* is that duty comes first with her.

I would no more have married one who let me make love to her during her husband's lifetime than I would have married — a native."

"You were never tried," remarked Cartwright shortly, and changed the subject, for his effort to stir Kenwithin from his depression had been successful; and the two men sat on in the moonlight, chatting casually of every-day matters until they parted for the night.

Helen Kenwithin gazed dreamily out over the dazzling glint of the Red Sea from the deck of an outward-bound P. and O. steamer. The six long, weary months of separation were nearly over, and she was returning to her beloved John, somewhat better in health, but with serious injunctions from the foremost heart specialist in London to avoid fatigue and excitement for the future. The deck was absolutely quiet, save for the monotonous vibration of the screw and an occasional flap of the awning in the burning, fitful wind. Helen's white eyelids were slowly drooping, when she was roused by the voice of a Mrs. Trench (her cabin companion), who, fresh from a nap below, was settling herself by Mrs. Kenwithin's side, relentlessly prepared for conversation.

She was an attractive little person of barely five-and-twenty, with sparkling brown eyes and crisp, ruddy hair. She and Mrs. Kenwithin had struck up a certain reserved friendship which neither permitted full play, seeing that it was not likely to be renewed; for, though Mrs. Trench had spent a few years in India, her husband's regiment had lately been moved to Aden, where she was now rejoining him after a summer in England.

"Here are the photographs I wanted to show you," she began, opening a packet in her lap. "They were in that box in the hold, after all. The first officer was angelic; he got it up for me, although it wasn't a baggage day." This with a significant air, which Helen ignored. She, like her husband, had no sympathy with flirtation.

She put out her hand for the photographs (which consisted chiefly of a collection of good-looking subalterns in uniform), glancing casually at each, until one arrested her attention.

"Oh, that's Cecil Cartwright — my husband's cousin. He's in our regiment. Fancy your knowing him! Isn't he nice?"

Mrs. Trench put the portrait back with a hasty, nervous movement. "I used to meet him at Simla," she said shortly.

"Yes, he spent all his leave there the last two or three years. John used to be furious because he wouldn't join shooting expeditions to Tibet or the Terai instead. I believe he means to take furlough next month if he can get it. A nasty

time of year to arrive in England. Don't you hate the winter?"

The reply and discussion that followed took them away from the subject of Cecil Cartwright, and Helen thought no more of the incident until the night before they reached Aden, when she was destined to learn why it was that her husband's cousin had spent so much of his leave at Simla.

According to her custom, Helen had gone early to bed, leaving on deck Mrs. Trench, who generally came down long after her cabin companion was asleep. To-night, however, she appeared a full hour before her usual time, and Helen, being still awake, saw with concern that the pretty face was white and quivering, and the large eyes shining with tears.

"Is anything the matter?" she asked involuntarily.

"Oh, did I wake you? I'm sorry. I came down because the moonlight on the water made me so miserable — anything beautiful makes me wretched now"; and sitting down on the edge of her berth, she began to cry hysterically, at the same time undressing with feverish haste.

That was so unlike the usually light-hearted little lady that Helen was alarmed, and went to her side.

"Tell me," she urged sympathetically.

"Mrs. Kenwithin," said the other suddenly, after a pause, "do you love your husband *very* much?"

"He is everything on earth to me!"

"Would you have loved him just the same if he had been a married man when you first met him? Supposing you knew that it was wrong to love him, would that stop you?"

"Oh, *don't!*" cried Helen chokingly. "What do you mean? Don't you care for your husband? Isn't he good to you?"

"He is more than good to me. But he is twenty-five years older than I am, and I married him before I knew anything at all about love. And now, just as you feel about your John I feel about a man who is not my husband. Oh, sometimes I wish I had never seen him! I dread meeting my husband to-morrow. I am always so frightened" — lowering her voice — "so frightened of his guessing —"

Mrs. Kenwithin's pity drowned her principles.

"Tell me about it; perhaps I can help you," she said, and the kindness and forbearance in her voice drew forth the ugly, commonplace little story of the love (innocent though it was of active wrong) that existed between Daisy Trench and Cecil Cartwright.

"How horrified you look!" was the defiant conclusion. "I suppose it sounds awful to you;

but there was no real harm; and I am the better for loving him — it has done me good."

"Good heavens!" burst out Helen passionately, "are you the better for acting a lie every second of your life to a husband who believes in you and loves you? Is it doing you good to feel in perpetual terror of being found out? You may say you could not help loving Cecil, but you could help fostering the love, and being mean, false, deceitful!"

"Oh," whimpered Mrs. Trench, looking like

"Write to him; write now, at once, and meet your husband to-morrow with a clear conscience."

"But I've packed up all my writing things. And I'm such a coward. I should be afraid of the letter going astray and coming back, and then my husband would see it. Such things have happened. A friend of mine told me once——"

"Let me tell Cecil," interrupted Mrs. Kenwith-in; "he will not have started when I get back."

The little woman hesitated, and for a moment



"HELEN! HELEN!" HE MOANED

a child who has accidentally broken something valuable, "I didn't mean to be so wicked."

Then Helen curbed her righteous anger and patiently strove to convince Mrs. Trench of the error of her ways. She pleaded with her, coaxed her, and frightened her by turns until the night was well on.

"Yes, I know, I know," she sobbed at last, in abject penitence. "I must give him up — I must never see him again. Oh, why couldn't God have made me happy and good like you? I am so miserable! And how am I to prevent his stopping at Aden on his way home?"

Helen feared that the battle would have to be fought afresh.

"Be brave, dear," she said. "I know you will be glad afterward." And finally she gained full permission to pronounce Cecil Cartwright's sentence irrevocably, and was solemnly intrusted with a heart-shaped locket containing his picture and a curl of his hair, and a bunch of faded forget-me-nots in an envelop on which was written, "With Cecil's love," all of which Mrs. Trench tearfully explained she had promised to return only if she wished everything to be over between them.

"But," she insisted, "you are on no account to say that I don't care for him any more — only that I mean to try not to because I know I ought to give him up. And I dare say," she added reluctantly, "it will be a relief in the end."

"I will explain," said Helen soothingly, and then she locked the little packet away among her most private papers.

But Cecil Cartwright never received it from her hands, because, the day after the ship left Aden, Mrs. Kenwithin died suddenly and quietly of failure of the heart, and the husband who had awaited her arrival so impatiently at Bombay was obliged to return to the square, thatched bungalow with only her boxes and personal belongings.

For him there followed days of bitter, aching darkness, during which he did his work mechanically, and wandered about the house and compound like a man in a dream, his wife's luggage piled unopened in her room, and the old ayah lingering disappointedly in the back premises.

Then at last Cartwright interfered, and offered to forgo his leave to England if Kenwithin would accompany him on a shooting tour in Assam. But the Major absolutely refused to take advantage of the other's good nature. So, finally, Cartwright took his furlough and departed, and perhaps his intended stoppage at Aden on his way home had somewhat to do with his arguing the matter no further.

Therefore it was not until long after Cartwright had gone, and the first agony of his utter loneliness was abating, that Kenwithin forced himself to go through his wife's things; and then it was that the little packet intrusted to Helen by Mrs. Trench fell into his hands.

A year later, when the Bombay mail train steamed into the large, echoing, up-country station at its accustomed hour, Cecil Cartwright and his wife were among the passengers who emerged from it.

The regiment had not been moved during Cartwright's furlough, but various changes had taken place, the most important being the retirement of Major Kenwithin. He had sent in his papers some weeks after his wife's death, which, it was generally understood, had changed him completely. Indeed, the few who had seen his haggard face and wild eyes previous to his departure feared that it had also affected his reason, a theory that was strengthened when it became known that he was not retiring to England, like other people, but meant to devote the remainder of his existence to sport in India.

Cartwright had written to his cousin on hearing of his retirement, but, receiving no answer,

and being the worst of correspondents, had not done so again until shortly before his return, when he announced his approaching marriage with the widow of Colonel Trench.

"I believe our marrying so soon after her husband's death is considered positively indecent," he wrote; "but I have cared for her for so long. Do you remember my telling you about it the evening you had returned from seeing poor Helen off?"

He had expected an answer to his news to meet him at Bombay, but none was forthcoming, and therefore his surprise and delight were unbounded when, among the usual crowd on the platform, he caught sight of a face which, though altered so as to be hardly recognizable, he knew to be Kenwithin's.

"Great Scott! there's John!" he exclaimed. "Wait for me here a minute, Daisy"; and he shouldered and pushed his way through the moving throng. "John, my dear old man! Did you get my letter? Have you come to meet us? How are you, old chap?"

"Yes," said Kenwithin inertly, "I got your letter, and I came to meet you to ask you a question which you can answer here — *now*."

Cartwright looked anxiously at the altered face, all his ardor damped in a moment. There was evidently something more the matter with Kenwithin than undying grief at the loss of his wife.

"Yes, yes, anything you like, John; only come with us to the hotel; we shall be there until our bungalow is straight. Are you stopping there, or with the regiment?"

"Neither. I wrote to the colonel for the date of your return, and I came by this morning's train. I shall go on by this one when you've told me what I want to know. Get into this carriage — we have only ten minutes more" — and he pushed the other into the empty first-class compartment before which they had been standing.

"But my wife —"

"Hang your wife! Look here; listen to me! Until I got your last letter I thought that — that — you and Helen —"

"*Helen!*"

"Look at that!" and he thrust a crumpled packet into Cartwright's astonished fingers. "Look at your infernal picture! Look at your hair; look at the flowers, 'With Cecil's love.' What does it all mean? Speak, man, explain!"

Cartwright had opened the packet in silence.

"Yes, I can explain," he said calmly. "These things were given to Helen for me by my wife. The two were in the same cabin as far as Aden. Helen persuaded her to give me up; she told me when I saw her at Aden on my way home, and I suppose I ought to have written to you

about it. But I never dreamed — it never even occurred to me that you would think it was Helen for one moment. Why didn't you write and ask me? Good heavens! imagine your suspecting her like that!"

"Stop!" cried Kenwithin hoarsely. "Do you think I don't loathe myself? But it is your fault — yours! You said there was no harm in that cursed intrigue of yours with another man's wife. Well, there was this harm in it, that it has blasted my life — it made me wrong her memory! I could kill you! Get out of the carriage — the train's moving." And before Cart-

wright could answer he found himself on the platform. The crowd of natives yelled and surged, the hot odor of curry and ghee and black humanity rose around him, and he stood dazed and apprehensive, seeing as through a mist the bright figure of his wife waiting patiently for him by their luggage, while the train sped on through the warm, quivering, afternoon air, carrying a man who sat with his face hidden in his hands, suffering the torture of bitter, hopeless regret.

"Helen! Helen!" he moaned, "forgive! forgive!"

THE TRAIN

BY

RHODA HERO DUNN

I WAKE to feel that rain
Is falling; though no beat
From drops upon the pane
Speaks of it. But so sweet
Have grown the lilac flowers,
I know that drifting showers
Are in my garden bowers.

No sound. Till, clear and plain
As though the dusk would sigh,
The whistle of a train
Brings to me, where I lie,
The old, heart-breaking call
Of distances, and all
Fair fates that elsewhere fall.

Oh, to be in that chain
Of golden-lighted cars!
Through misty field and lane,
Quick stringing lines of stars!
On! Onward! Till the night,
Rimmed by the dawn's first light,
Finds cities, strange and white.

Yet all would be in vain!
Some spring night I should wake
To hear the falling rain;
And then my heart would break
To think that drifting showers
Are sweetening lilac flowers
Here in my garden bowers.